

Dodge County Highway Commission Guidelines for Roadside Memorials on County Trunk Highways

Loss of life from a traffic crash has a devastating impact on families and friends of the victim. A loved one is suddenly no longer with us. The Dodge County Highway Commission understands the distressing shock of such a loss of life. They also recognize that some people grieve by placing a memorial within a highway right-of-way near the crash site.

While the Highway Commission acknowledges the need some people feel to express themselves in this way, the placement of memorials within a roadway's right-of-way is not allowed under state statutes. Roadside memorials may also be a safety hazard.

Safety is the Highway Commission's Highest Priority

No one wants to see a subsequent tragedy result from a previous incident. For safety's sake, statutes require that only items that perform a specific highway function are allowed within a highway right-of-way.

Mourners who stop to maintain a memorial not only place themselves in danger, they also put other motorists at risk.

What Can be Done?

Current policy for the Highway Commission is to remove a memorial as soon as possible if it poses a safety concern, for example:

- ❖ If it interferes with roadway safety features or vision
- ❖ If it negatively impacts the free flow of traffic
- ❖ If it would be a hazard should it be hit

A memorial will also be removed if:

- ❖ It interferes with routine maintenance
- ❖ It falls into disrepair

When the Highway Commission becomes aware of a memorial, they will investigate to determine whether immediate removal is necessary or if it can be allowed to remain for a temporary period not to exceed one year. Typically the memorial will not be immediately removed.

If a memorial is removed, the owner is contacted, if known, and told where it may be retrieved. Individuals should understand that any memorial placed on public right-of-way is temporary and should expect it would not remain in place for more than a year.

The Highway Commission strongly encourages grieving parties who wish to place a memorial near the site of the fatal crash to work with an adjoining landowner to designate an appropriate location, off a road's right-of-way, for placement of a memorial.

Adopting a Highway as an Alternative

As an alternative form of memorial, the Highway Commission allows friends and family to adopt a two-mile-long highway segment under the Adopt-a-Highway program with signage that notes that the highway has been adopted in memory of their loved one. The sign is installed by the Highway Commission in compliance with federal and state standards. Those who adopt a highway are required to clean their adopted roadway at least three times a year.

The benefits of this approach are that the deceased can be recognized in a manner that conforms to state statutes and allows mourners to positively affect Dodge County's roadsides while giving them access to the crash site at least three times a year.

For more information on roadside memorials, contact:

Dodge County Highway Commission

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